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CIVIL SERVICES DAY 2010

THE WINNERS

SANJAY DUBEY
CEO, MPRRDA

GULSHAN BAMRA
Collector. DM

RADHIKA DORAISWAMY
Secretary (Posts)

VIJAY SINGHAL
Municipal Commissioner

RAJESH LAKHANI
Commissioner

SS KHAN
DG (IT), Retd

OP RAWAT
Vice-Chairman, NVDA

ALOK SHUKLA
Deputy EC

SAMIT SHARMA
Collector, DM

The PM gave a huge boost to civil service morale by stressing the importance of the steel frame of governance in safeguarding the core values of India's development

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LETTERS: With reference to "Catching the tigress by the tail" (*gfiles*, April 2010), it is unfortunate that the Women's Reservation Bill has been passed in the Rajya Sabha – that, too, with a thumping majority. The word "reservation" must be deleted from the Constitution of India by introducing an appropriate amendment. Politicians use reservations to serve their selfish and narrow goals and exploit vote banks. The Women's Reservation Bill is an absurd idea. Women have the capacity to achieve great levels of excellence on their own, without any help from their male colleagues. This has already been proven repeatedly in politics as well as in other spheres of life. If a woman is capable, who can stop her from rising to the top?
M Kumar, via email

I thought that the article, "An Adhocracy in the making", was occasioned by the Performance Monitoring and Evaluation System (PMES) initiative of the Central government. But somewhere either I or the article lost focus and spoke of things other than PMES. At the macro level, regardless of who comes in and from where (Harvard or wherever), what is important is that billions of rupees of taxpayers' money is going down the drain without changing lives in any meaningful way. At political or administrative levels, accountability has gone missing. It is not just the IAS or any service in particular, the permanent executive has become the agent of the political party in power and its agenda – throwing to the winds the accepted norms of good governance.

So, if the Central government comes out with an initiative like PMES, what is wrong with that? Whether Prajapati Trivedi from Harvard heads it or someone else, who cares? As long as the job is well executed, does it matter whether it adopts or follows a particular model emanating from a particular country? if the money spent in the last 60 years on Plan, non-Plan or any other fiscal measures adopted by the government were to be added up, almost every target family would be a millionaire, if not a billionaire. There would be no room for Maoists, Naxalites or any kind of social unrest rooted in economic disparities. But the fact is that our dispensations and policy execution have failed us repeatedly and it is time the Central government introduces strict accountability norms. So let us examine every move on its merits and not see it through the coloured prism of our opinions.
Om Pathak, on blog

Om Pathak admits that he probably missed the focus of the article. The article is not on PMES or RFD or Prajapati Trivedi. Neither is it meant to be a critique on this "administrative streamlining" initiative. It is much more basic and about a fast-growing, inbreeding adhocracy, with the IAS in the lead, adhering to an alien MNC agenda. If allowed to grow and prosper it will sound the death knell of our institutional framework and there will be no governance left, let alone any semblance of good governance. Hence the deep concern. I believe in the saying in Tamil: "Blow the horn and leave it. Some day, somewhere, its echo may reverberate."
MG Devasahayam, on blog

I agree with Public Corner. Central Bank is the worst of the lot of nationalized banks.
*SC Nagpal,*on blog

The Editor-in-Chief has covered well some of the issues related to governance, regulatory aspects and the need for compliance. All these are to be strongly adhered to by all stakeholders. Human governance aspects are equally important for achieving inclusive growth with justice. Greed is to be curtailed, if it is not possible to totally eliminate it.
SP Garg, on blog

gfiles
INSIDE THE GOVERNMENT

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From the Editor-in-Chief

THIS issue of *gfiles* is somewhat inspirational. The stories scattered through its pages may appear disparate but, actually, there is a theme. Huh? What do Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Jamia Millia Vice-Chancellor Najeeb Jung have in common?

You don't have to look further than the pages of this issue of the magazine to find the answer. Manmohan Singh, in a sober but sterling lecture to the nation's award-winning bureaucrats on Civil Services Day (see cover story) made it clear that when a civil servant innovates, thinks out of the box, and demonstrates his competence in solving problems wherever he is posted, there is no need for a political godfather or multi-layered clearances.

Jung, whose career spans the IAS, the Asian Development Bank and academe, says: "I never encountered lack of freedom in the government. You can do what you wish if you have integrity and sincerity. As a collector and DM the freedom you have is unimaginable...I did not need to go to anybody because you have clear-cut responsibilities under the Constitution."

Are the Prime Minister and Vice-Chancellor looking at the real world of governance through rose-coloured spectacles? Perhaps not. Perhaps they are expressing an ideal and an experience peculiar to their own professional journeys. So where does our intrepid columnist, Shailaja Chandra, who has the civil services literally coming out of her ears, stand on all this?

Listen to her Alice-in-Wonderland experience of bureaucracy: "In the state governments the Queen of Hearts will simply order, 'Off with his head' if an officer protests too much. In the Central government, however, the King of Spades has to manage with the officers he gets. And he will use whatever levers are available to get his work done: bully, cajole, browbeat, flatter and – ultimately – humiliate."

There is a silver lining: "Fortunately," she says, "not all Ministers are like that."

The truer, less idealistic, picture is probably more like the one Chandra paints. Dark clouds usually gobble up every silver lining that attempts to illuminate the murky skies of governance and bureaucracy. Yet, optimism must prevail, as it has every reason to, when you look at the first-rate work performed by the civil services teams and individuals who received top honours for their work. Examples:

Sanjay Dubey (DM, Jabalpur) successfully removed encroachments of a religious nature on public roads without hurting religious sentiments; Gulshan Bamra (DM, Balaghat) implemented the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme with verve and daring in this Naxal-infested region; Samit Sharma (DM, Chittorgarh) revolutionized the way drugs and surgical instruments are procured, disbursed and sold in rural areas in Rajasthan; Vijay Singhal (Collector, Jalgaon) implemented an innovative river linking project to divert excess water from the Girna dam to water-scarce regions; Rajesh Lakhani (Commissioner, Corporation of Chennai) executed a new programme in the area of women's preventive healthcare to detect precancerous lesions of the cervix and take appropriate action to bring down the morbidity and mortality rates; a three-member team – Alok Shukla, Gaurav Dwivedi and AK Somasekhar computerized the paddy procurement and public distribution system in Chhattisgarh...

My hunch is that they did not need godfathers and that they went against the lethargy and vested interests of the prevailing power structures. They did not get the applause given to a cricketer scoring a six on TV in an IPL game. But they did, however, on the low-key Civil Services Day, receive a hearty *shabaash* from the Prime Minister. Indeed, they deserve the gratitude of the nation.

INDERJIT BADHWAR

CIVIL SERVICES DAY
21 April 2010
Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances
Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions

PM'S BACK TO BA

Manmohan Singh chose to honour the top achievers by

by **Anil Tyagi**

An outsider at Vigyan Bhawan on April 21, 2010 would have scarcely thought he was attending one of the most powerful award distribution ceremonies of the Indian state. Consider the following: there were only three TV crews and six journalists present; national dailies relegated the event to small type on the back pages; Doordarshan carried a staid live broadcast; the media kit was incomplete; the Department of Administrative Reforms website continued to carry visuals of Civil Services Day 2009 until April 25, four days after the ceremony.

The occasion, bearing the theme "Innovations in Government", was Civil Services Day, 2010, when the nation's top individual achievers and teams from the bureaucracy receive the highest honours of governance. Curiously, this low-key affair was not out of tune with the recent past. The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (in charge of organizing Civil Services Day) appears reluctant to blow the trumpet even when it has occasion to celebrate innovation, initiative, and the old fashioned spirit of sacrifice in the soldiers manning the IAS trenches in the remotest districts of the nation.

Babudom seems to have eclipsed achievement, or why

The awards function: glory with sobriety

PHOTOS: SHARAD SAXENA

BASICS MESSAGE

rs by putting the ball of progress squarely in their court

else would the bureaucratic powers that be treat this splendid occasion as if they're just clearing another file? The newspapers are choc-a-bloc with ads vaunting government achievements on January 26, August 15, October 2, on birthdays of politicians past, as well as inauguration of bridges.

In the brave new world of the internet, sms, Twitter, Facebook, the proclivity not to discuss hardcore achievements by bureaucrats creates more suspicion than trust.

The Civil Services Day marked the second term of Manmohan Singh as the definitive boss of the bureaucracy. Flanked by National Security Adviser Shiv Shankar Menon and Principal Secretary TKA Nair, the Prime Minister made it clear that when a civil servant innovates, thinks out of the box, and demonstrates his competence in solving problems wherever he is posted, there is no need for a political godfather. The system is so leveraged that it needs tools (read bureaucracy) to operate in an automated manner to solve the complex problems of the needy and poor.

MANMOHAN Singh inaugurated the function, accompanied by Prithviraj Chavan, Minister for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pension, and Jyotiraditya Scindia, Minister for Commerce and Industry.

If the organizing bureaucrats seemed diffident in plug-

Scindia (left) and Chavan: no need for political godfathers

ging the triumphs of their colleagues and teams, the Prime Minister was not in the least bashful in emphasizing that the bureaucracy – the steel frame of governance – should lead from the front in tackling the increasingly complex challenges faced by civil society.

Higher levels of education, income and awareness, he said, have raised the aspirations and expectations of people: "We face many new threats to the integrity of our country, both from within and from without. Terrorism and left-wing extremism seek to challenge the very foundations of our democratic and secular polity. Climate change and degradation of our environment threaten not only the quality of our lives but that of future generations as well. An efficient and equitable management of the country's water resources presents new challenges."

Manmohan Singh appealed to his national civil services team to pay special attention to agriculture, stressing that greater efforts must be made to increase the productivity of dry land, rain-fed farming: "I have said this earlier and I repeat it today again that the agriculture departments in the states need to be manned by our very best officers. I hope the Chief Secretaries of states will attempt to ensure this."

He cautioned that while it was paramount that left-wing extremism, "perhaps the gravest internal security threat that we face" should be defeated, "we cannot overlook the fact that many areas in which such extremism flourishes are under-developed and many of the people, mainly poor tribals, who live in these areas have not shared equitably in the fruits of development. It is incumbent upon us to ensure that no area of our country is denied the benefits of our ambitious developmental programmes. It is a daunting task that will test the endurance and mettle of our civil servants, especially that of the All-India services."

It is "up to you", he told India's civil servants, "to devise innovative ways and means, to harness the tools of information technology and to involve the intended beneficiaries in implementation so that complaints of leakages, complaints of corruption and complaints of lack of transparency get addressed. Indeed, this applies to all programmes and schemes for delivery of services."

Cabinet Secretary KM Chandrasekhar spoke in the same vein: "There are many, many areas on which we need to move forward. One important area where we have not made sufficient progress relates to performance appraisal of civil servants. The present system does not enable us to distinguish between performers and non-performers. Performance at higher levels can be truly productive only if we can identify the doers in a meaningful and objective manner and encourage them to achieve greater heights."

But he also noted that "what encourages me, on the other hand, is the enthusiasm and energy levels that I see amongst our younger officers. During my visits to different states, I have come across amazing achievements in the field, wrought by young officers of all services. They display high levels of motivation and a great spirit of innovation." An interesting suggestion was made by Chavan – that the state services should also start giving awards on the same lines. g

YEAR OF THE ACHIEVERS

Individuals

Sanjay Dubey, IAS,
Then Collector & District Magistrate, Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh.
Initiative: Removal of Encroachments of Structures – Maintaining Communal Harmony, Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh.

REMOVAL of encroachments of a religious nature on public roads and lands without hurting religious sentiments is tough. An anti-encroachment drive was undertaken in Jabalpur district in 2005 by Sanjay Dubey, Collector and District Magistrate, Jabalpur. Several rounds of meetings of the peace committee were held to decide the modalities of removal of religious structures. The members of the peace committee were taken into confidence and their cooperation solicited in the implementation of the orders of the High Court.

Dubey also called on religious gurus and opinion-makers, collectively and individually. Though the different interest groups were wary of showing their commitment openly, they were supportive.

Out of 556 structures, 311 were demolished/relocated during September 2005 to June 2008 without disrupting communal harmony. This brought down the number of road accidents and facilitated development work under the JNNURM and other schemes. Citizens are now active in preventing fresh encroachments.

Gulshan Bamra, IAS,
Collector & District Magistrate, Balaghat, Madhya Pradesh.
Initiative: Involvement of Community in Naxalite-affected Areas, Balaghat, Madhya Pradesh.

BALAGHAT is one of the Naxal-affected districts of MP and has been characterized by lack of employment opportunities. The district administration sought to implement the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) in 2006 through citizen-centric governance, participatory approach to development planning and addressing issues like wage employment, agricultural productivity and livelihood opportunities.

Bamra, who took charge of the district with a population of 1.5 million in 2006, made it a priority to bring about a proactive administration that focused on people-centric governance, integrated implementation of government schemes like NREGS, sensitive policing, and so on. Bamra integrated the use of development money under Central schemes such as road building, the state government's watershed programme and yearly Plan funds, along with the projects taken up under NREGS. Since the development programmes were devised according to the local demand and monitored from the panchayat level onwards, stakeholders' participation was ensured. Complaint boxes and complaint registers were maintained at workplaces.

In three years, the road connectivity in the district increased to 2,228 km from 520 km. About 28,000 hectares of new land came under irrigation. Activities such as tendu leaf collection and bamboo cutting were resumed. Revenues from forest produce nearly doubled from Rs 28 crore in 2006-07 to Rs 55 crore in 2008-09. Migration dropped from 4,217 in 2005-06 to 2,840 in 2008-09 as locals found work near their homes. It was a people-centric programme where all issues of local and social interests were discussed with the active participation of male and female members and decisions were taken in a democratic manner. Thus, Bamra weaned the local community from the Naxal influence and ensured all-round development.

Samit Sharma, IAS,
Then District Magistrate, Chittorgarh, Rajasthan.
Initiative: Making Medicines Affordable, Chittorgarh, Rajasthan.

THE project was initiated to bring down the cost of generic medicines in remote villages. Making quality drugs available at government cooperative medical shops at less than one-fourth the price at which they are sold in private

medical shops – has revolutionized the way drugs and surgical instruments are procured, disbursed and sold in rural Rajasthan.

The highlight of implementation was ensuring accessibility of drugs, through a district-wide chain of fair price medicine shops which serve the OPDs and Indoor Patients of government hospitals, and the public as well. The initiative included persuading doctors to prescribe generic medicines. Procurement of these medicines was done as advised by a team of doctors and certain very prestigious pharmaceutical companies were empanelled as drug procurement partners. Medicines thus obtained were dispensed through government-controlled medical stores at prices much below MRP while making 20 per cent profit, thus making the initiative self-sustainable. The initiative mirrors Sharma's ability to innovate, his leadership qualities, his style of functioning as a team player, and above all his commitment to reach out to the poor. As the DM of Chittorgarh, he created a synergy between the government doctors, district administration, and the machinery in the health, cooperative and finance departments.

The initiative reached out to the poor (BPL families), preventing them from falling into a debt trap on account of medical expenses. Affordability of medicines has helped them willingly seek medical treatment. Approximately 5.1 lakh patients procured low-cost drugs in Chittorgarh district. The initiative brought down the expenditure of the state exchequer as the medicines provided free of cost were also procured at the generic drug prices. It also made 24x7 diagnostic test facility available in all government hospitals at less than half the cost.

Vijay Singhal, IAS,
Then Collector & District Magistrate, Jalgaon, Maharashtra.
Initiative: River Linking Project, Jalgaon, Maharashtra

IN 2005, Jalgaon district received scant rainfall while most of Maharashtra experienced a flood-like situation. All water reservoirs were empty and ground-water was depleting. In neighbouring Nashik district, Girna dam was overflowing. The Jalgaon district administration implemented an innovative river linking project to divert excess water from the dam to Jalgaon. Cooperation and support were garnered from all the stakeholders to achieve a common objective, namely, tackling water scarcity and providing water for irrigation and other purposes. The landowners affected by the project were willing partners, as parting with some of their land would make the remainder arable.

Singhal conceived the project and provided leadership in translating the concept into reality in record time with full support from all stakeholders. He sought the support of the local communities and villagers in the form of *shramdan* and marshalled resources from the irrigation department, state government and MP/MLA Local Area Development Scheme funds.

The initiative solved the drinking water problem for a population of about 0.85 million in one municipal corporation, five municipal councils and 123 villages, saving money spent on supply of water by tankers. It resulted in additional storage capacity of 4,886 mcft of water. Around 700 medium, small dams, village tanks and percolation tanks were filled and more than 16,000 water wells were recharged. The irrigated area increased from 13,000 hectares in 2005 to 30,000 hectares in 2008.

Rajesh Lakhani, IAS,
Commissioner, Corporation of Chennai, Tamil Nadu.
Initiative: Cervical Cancer Screening, Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

MADRAS Cancer Registry reported 1,90,000 cases of cervical cancer in 2002. This was due to epidemiological and social conditions. Poor women in their earning years are at high risk as a result of low socio-economic status, poor genital hygiene, early marriage and lack of knowledge about the disease and treatment. A programme to detect precancerous lesions in women between 18 and 60 years was launched by the Municipal Corporation.

Lakhani applied a cost- and time-effective (one visit) WHO-approved cryotherapy technology through the existing machinery, after training. Emphasis was laid on proactive outreach through multi-purpose health workers, who go into the community and mobilize beneficiaries to avail of screening and follow-up tests. Cryotherapy involves continuous monitoring and regular follow-up over 5 years. Treatment was given at the 9 zonal health centres, in a single visit. All 93 health posts were equipped for detection.

The number of tests done in all medical college hospitals was only 1230 in 2007-08. Through the initiative, coverage was extended to over 1 lakh poor and marginalized women. In a population of 18 lakh women, screening of 1,73,689 was completed between April 2008 and November 2009; 1579 were detected positive and saved. The remainder are being screened. The government of Tamil Nadu is introducing this initiative all over the state.

Alok Shukla, IAS, then Secretary, Department of FCS & CA.
Gaurav Dwivedi, IAS, then Managing Director, MARKFED & CGSCSC.
AK Somasekhar, Scientist 'D', National Informatics Centre.
Initiative: Computerization of Paddy Procurement and Public Distribution System, Chhattisgarh.

FOOD procurement and public distribution are two important pillars of the food policy of the Government of India for protecting farmers' and consumers' interests. Chhattisgarh procures over 30 lakh tonnes of paddy every year on Minimum Support Price from more than 78.5 lakh farmers over about 3.5 months. Under this initiative, all processes involved in paddy procurement and PDS have been fully computerized involving organizations like Department of Food, Chhattisgarh Marketing Federation, Chhattisgarh State Civil Supplies Corporation, Food Corporation of India, and Central Cooperative Bank.

Web-based monitoring of transportation of PDS commodities at Chhattisgarh State Civil Supplies Corporation headquarters has been developed. GPS technology is used to monitor transportation of PDS commodities from warehouses to FPS. The movement of the truck is shown on a map as a moving icon in real time and can be monitored from the control room. If the truck goes to a geofenced area, SMS alarms are sent to the concerned authorities so that action can be taken. The system is a technological solution to check diversion of PDS commodities.

Complaints lodged through a citizen interface website or a call centre are monitored. Details of the inquiry officer, his report, and action taken by the centres are entered in the system by the concerned authority.

The initiative has helped increase transparency, eliminate corruption and ensure people's participation at all levels. Transparency is also ensured in maintaining Unified Ration Card Database and issue of PDS commodities to FPS, which facilitated all the eligible households to utilize their right to have a ration card.

At a time when the effectiveness of the public service delivery system is coming under scrutiny and PPPs are being touted as the only option to improve service delivery, the team through this initiative has established the continuing relevance of government institutions in reaching out to the rural poor.

OP Rawat, IAS, Principal Secretary, Government of Madhya Pradesh.
Jaideep Govind, IAS, then Commissioner, Tribal Development.
Anil Oberoi, IFS, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests.
Rashmi Arun Shami, IAS, then Director, Tribal Area Development Planning.
Ashok Kumar Upadhyay, Additional Director.
Initiative: Recognition of Forest Rights, Madhya Pradesh.

THE Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 came into effect on December 31, 2007. The initiative to ensure that tribals and traditional forestdwellers received the entitlement to forest resources, and were protected from exploitation by vested interests, was undertaken in January 2008 in Madhya Pradesh.

The Tribal Welfare Department of the state government, with the help of its forest department, developed a very detailed software called "Survey of Forest Dwellers". It helps in entering data of each beneficiary. It also gives complete districtwise/blockwise MIS information. The information is placed on a website to make the system transparent. The state government used the personal digital assistant (PDA), Geographical Information System (GIS) and Global Positioning System (GPS) for digital geo-mapping of land holdings of the claimants. This facilitated the survey of tribal communities and the creation of a database at the district level, making the implementation very efficient and expeditious at a very low cost.

As of 31.3.2009, the state government had received 3,29,184 claims. It had disposed of 13,060 and 32,419 title deeds were ready for distribution. The manner in which the Central Act was implemented made it very cost-effective. The government's success in reaching out to the illiterate tribal population is evidenced by a large number of applications. Such large-scale implementation could be achieved without any complaints from any quarter.

SS Khan, IRS (IT), then Director General of Income Tax (Investigation), New Delhi.
Milap Jain, IRS (IT), Director General of Income Tax (Investigation), New Delhi.
GT Venkateswara Rao, IRS (IT), then Additional Director of Income Tax (Investigation), New Delhi.
Initiative: Integrated Taxpayer Data Management System (ITDMS), Central Board of Direct Taxes, Government of India.

THIS initiative involved intelligent use of the Information & Communication Technologies (ICT) to develop a software search engine (a profiling tool) called MIPPRA – Multi-Interactive Phonetic Pattern Recognition Algorithm – for matching names and addresses, based on whatever (little) data is available. It converts information into actionable intelligence.

The tool is an effective and non-intrusive investigation mechanism. The power of the software lay in the creation of identifiable groups of transactions by the same taxpayer. A complementary ETL (Extract, Transform and Load) tool was developed to handle all types of file/data structures. Search parameters were made customizable. It has a choice of range of years, value and volume of transactions, constitution of the entity and so on. The team took the initiative of converting a huge mass of data and information available in different databases into actionable intelligence. This unique and innovative tool has been conceptualized, designed, developed (with the help of an outside agency), implemented and is being maintained by the team.

The tool is able to quickly source information from across different databases and create an integrated profile of the entity. It is facilitating isolation of taxpayers and groups having abnormal and/or high volume and/or high value of transactions. Matching of the identified groups with the data of their actual tax payments is an intelligent control mechanism made possible by the tool. The tool successfully helps the department overcome the difficulty and drudgery involved in manual collection and analysis of data from different sources in different structures and formats.

Department of Posts, Ministry of Communication & IT, Government of India.
Radhika Doraiswamy, Secretary (posts)
Initiative: Project Arrow – Transforming India Post.

'PROJECT Arrow' was launched in April 2008 as an innovative integrated approach to reforming India Post and enhancing the quality of services and improving people's experience of select post offices around the country. Fifty post offices were selected during Phase I while 45 were covered in Phase 2, ending in December 2008. Phase 3, covering 500 post offices, is in progress. Innovations include integrated approach to improving technology, processes, and aesthetics related to four areas: mail delivery, savings bank, remittances, and service levels through streamlining and digitization of processes and monitoring and supervision systems that involve stakeholders. Innovations to improve the "look and feel" of the post offices include inputs regarding human resources, branding, technology and infrastructure.

The objective of this project was to provide all e-enabled services so that post offices become a "window to the world" for the *aam aadmi*. IT-enabled reliable tools are used to ensure that all postal operations are carried out smoothly and less time is consumed by back-end operations. Performance Dashboard, a web-based monitoring system based on Data Extractions Tool, has been implemented. A Blue Book, wherein all the best practices were summarized, was brought out. Monitoring performance against the Key Performance Indications (KPIs) is the key to the success of Project Arrow.

The Project Arrow experience is a working model for bringing in integrated improvement in post offices so that customers can feel the difference. External audit of 50 post offices chosen for the pilot project revealed 99 per cent improvement in registered letter performance, 94-100 per cent for ordinary mail, 89-90 per cent for Speed Post, and 100 per cent for money orders. Average customer satisfaction score was 9.52 on a scale of 10. Employee motivation scored at 5.8 on a 6-point scale. Delivery of money orders on the day of receipt and removal of bottlenecks of cash availability in sub- and branch post offices and infrastructure to expand services were other highlights. g

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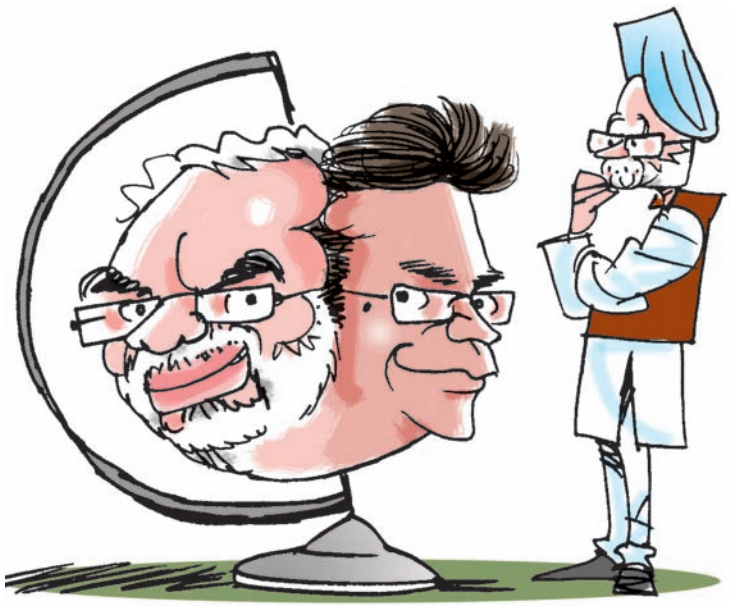
cricket controversy confuses pm



ONE tweet by Lalit Modi and the lid was blown off a virtual Pandora's box. The then Minister of State for External Affairs, Shashi Tharoor, did not know what hit him. However, even if the entire world, from the UN to the banana chips vendor in Kochi, knew all about Modi, IPL, Shashi-and-Sunanda, one man remained oblivious to it all. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was en route to Brazil for the Brazil-Russia-India-China (BRIC) summit, when he finally woke up to the controversy and asked his media adviser, veteran journalist Harish Khare, to brief him on what was happening.

As Khare began explaining the links between Modi and cricket, Manmohan, who is not a keen follower of the gentleman's game, looked increasingly bewildered. It was wife Gursharan Kaur, who was listening to the conversation, who noted this and came to the rescue. "Harish is talking about Lalit Modi of IPL and not Narendra Modi of Gujarat," she explained. As peals of laughter resulted, a confused Manmohan said, "Yes, I know that but what is this IPL?"

Digging for dirt

minister targets colleague

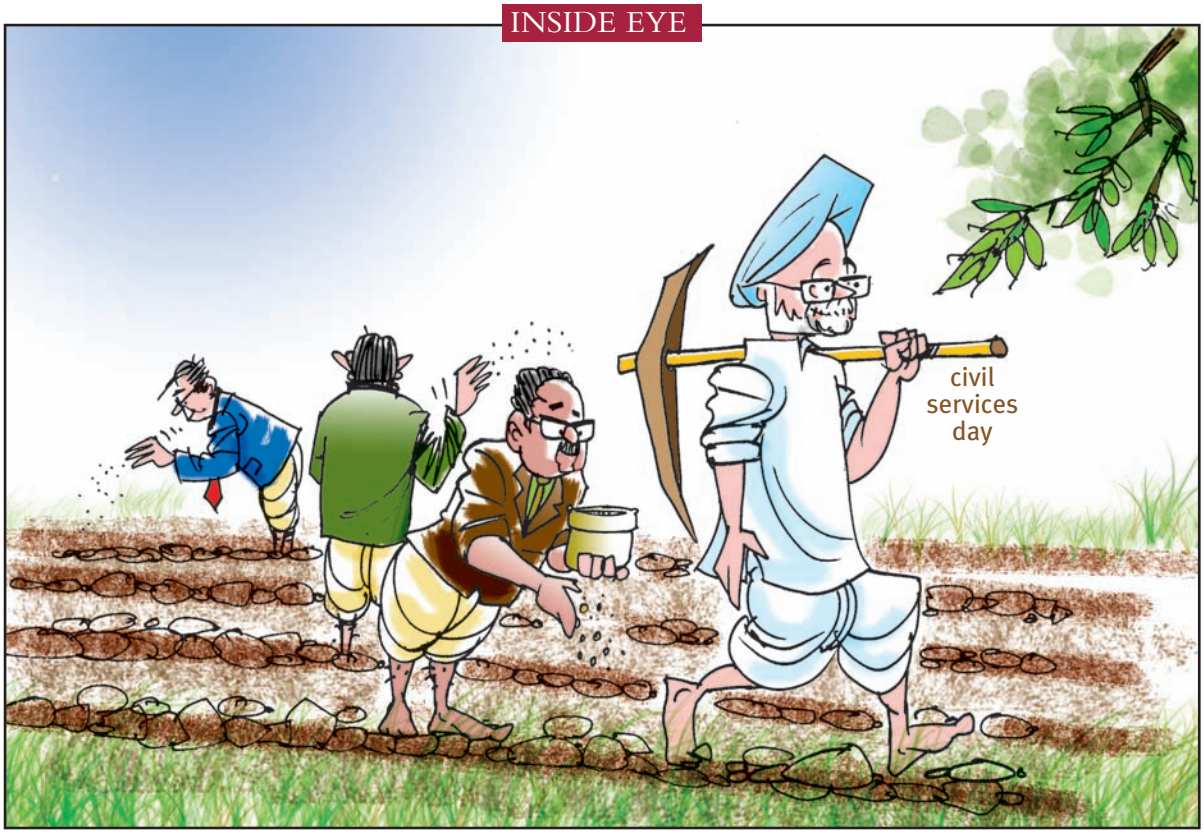
THE bitter cold war among politicians in North Block is a well known fact and the faces of the bureaucrats who have to get work done amidst it mirror the stress they face. This summer, the well decorated corridors of North Block are witnessing another kind of offensive. One of the most senior members of the Cabinet is on the prowl, stalking another equally senior colleague. This old and shrewd gent, a staunch devotee of Ma Kali, is unnaturally concerned about his contemporary's financial dealings. So a complete team of senior officials of his Ministry spent months digging out the financial transactions of the target, his wife and son. Even the officials instrumental in acquiring all this information are at a loss as to what their boss will do with it. As he is a 10, Janpath loyalist, the information was documented in the form of a commission report and submitted to the Gandhi residence. Everyone is holding their breath, waiting to see what happens next.

Quartet in a jam

four leaders hunt for rs seats

FOUR Brahmin Congress leaders – Anand Sharma, Satish Sharma, Suresh Pachauri and Jairam Ramesh – are in a fix, unable to find safe Rajya Sabha seats. Anand's home state, Himachal Pradesh, is ruled out as the BJP is in power there. Satish faces the same problem as Uttarakhand is also under the BJP. But Satish is attempting to lure Ajit Singh so that he can be elected from Uttar Pradesh. And Ajit can be adjusted in the coming Cabinet reshuffle. But Chaudhry Charan Singh's *beta* is as unpredictable as weather.

Pachauri has been assured a seat from Madhya Pradesh but Digvijay Singh, the powerful AICC general secretary, keeps everybody in good humour so nothing can be taken for granted. Ramesh is sure of his seat, in



ILLUSTRATIONS: ARUNA

Andhra Pradesh, but not of how the voters will vote. He knows of the last-minute glitches in the Congress in Andhra Pradesh.

It's strange that these gentlemen are at a loss because they have all been political advisers in their time.

After Manmohan, who?

interim pm being pondered

ALL is not well between the Congress party and the PMO. Party stalwarts are assessing Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's performance in the past year. With several states going to the polls this year and early next year, the party is in a mood to have a new face as PM before the reins of power go to Rahul Gandhi. If Bhuvanesh Chaturvedi, the one-time confidant of PV Narasimha Rao, is to be believed, Manmohan Singh is under tremendous pressure.

The question arises: after Manmohan, who? If it's performance in the past year that counts, then Pranab Mukherjee scores over everyone else. But another strong contender is Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar. She has performed excellently in the Lower House, and she is a Dalit and the daughter of Babu Jagjivan Ram.

Also, doubts are harboured over Mukherjee being ambitious and the chance that he might sabotage the plan for Rahul's takeover. Dada's loyalists say he learned a lot in the days, in the 1990s, when he would wait outside Oscar Fernandes' office in the AICC headquarters till 3 am and then drive himself home in his old red Maruti. All this is alarming for the PMO, but it is in the nature of courtiers to keep asking, "After the king, who?" g

The real ENE

Should defence forces be pulled in to fight for the mining

by **MG Devasahayam**

GENERAL Vijay Kumar Singh, the new Chief of the Army Staff, commenced his innings as head of the world's second largest standing Army with a candid remark: "The armed forces have their own value systems, which have to be different from civil society."

Every soldier, however, is born and brought up in civil society before entering the armed forces and returns to the same society after his/her services for the prescribed tenure. During the interregnum he/she imbibes a fundamentally different value system that is enshrined in the soul-raising credo of the Indian Military Academy (IMA): "The safety, honour and welfare of your country come first, always and every time. The honour, welfare and comfort of the men you command come next. Your own ease, comfort and safety come last, always and every time."

Crowning the valour of the soldier is the heart-rending inscription at the Kohima War Cemetery: "When you go home, tell them of us and say – for your tomorrow, we gave our today." In the event, Gen Singh was right when he said: "We have to ensure the image and dignity of our soldiers is upheld. To that extent, our core values, our ethos, traditions will receive due attention."

This message, coming after a flurry of Army scandals ranging from liquor, meat, cereal, petrol, real estate and other scams to even sexual harassment cases in recent times, is timely.

The Army chief's attempt to ringfence and isolate the armed forces' value system from that of civil society's, however, is untenable. It is prudent for both to merge and the latter to be upgraded by the former's high standards. Strange as it may sound, the military profession characterized by loyalty, courage, integrity, and selflessness can

KUNAL VERMA

Military cadets: defending a value system?

be a moral anchor for a parent society that is besmirched with moral deprivation, egoism, and acquisitiveness. Despite all that is wrong with the armed forces, any opinion poll today will put that institution at the top of the table in honesty, integrity and trustworthiness.

Today, we have governments at the Centre and the states run on agendas set by venal and profit-oriented "investors" and multi-national companies (MNCs) even if it means waging war on our own people. The ongoing "war on tribal terror" is a case in point. The mandate for the paramilitary forces in this war is to clear the tribal area of insurgent groups, hold the territory and prepare the ground for development projects by civilian agencies.

The mandate is obviously to facilitate the mining MNCs to build their industrial empires on this "captured" territory. A look at the interests of the London-based MNC — Vedanta Resources plc, one of the world's largest — gives enough clues. Of India's total aluminium capacity of 1.3 million tonnes, Vedanta will account for 885,000 tonnes once its Jharsuguda smelter in Orissa is commissioned in the coming months. In a move to make the best use of Orissa's bauxite and coal deposits, Vedanta is creating 1.6 million tonnes of smelting capacity at Jharsuguda to be backed by a five-million tonne refinery at Lanjigarh and a power complex of 3,750 MW.

In Lanjigarh alone, Vedanta has access to bauxite deposits of 75 million tonnes and the government has promised an equally large deposit nearby. A

MY within

ing interests of carpetbaggers like the Vedanta company?

PIB

Chidambaram (above) and Antony are at loggerheads over directly employing the armed forces in the ongoing battle against the Maoists.

five-million tonne refinery is justified, provided links to bauxite deposits lasting for about 50 years can be acquired. Orissa, where most of Vedanta's aluminium action is to unfold, has an estimated 1.7 billion tonnes of the country's total 3.3 billion tonnes of reserves. Vedanta says it has strong claims to free deposits because of the world's single largest smelter it is committed to building at Jharsuguda. If Vedanta has its way, all this capacity will be on the ground by 2013.

These reserves lie under the vast Dandakaranya forests spread over parts of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkand, Orissa, Bihar and West Bengal. It is these lands that have to be cleared and held for MNCs to develop for which they have signed scores of MoUs with governments. Largescale mining is synonymous with massive kickbacks and irreversible environmental destruction. Yet a state-of-war has been declared to fulfill the MNC agenda by sacrificing the lives of our hapless paramilitary jawans.

AN acid test for the armed forces' upholding of their long-cherished values will come in the role they will play in this "war". Home Minister P Chidambaram, whom the Congress has discarded but the BJP hails as the "General at the battlefront" has promised to lead from the front and is very keen to launch the full might of the armed forces – especially the Air Force and Army – for "securing the tribal territory" for the MNCs by 2013, the same deadline as set by Vedanta for building its infrastructure!

The reasons for the synchronization of the Vedanta-Chidambaram deadlines are not far to seek. This is best explained in Vedanta's 2004 Annual Report in which Chairman Brian Gilbertson records: "On 22 May 2004, Mr P Chidambaram resigned from the Board, following his appointment as Finance Minister in the new Indian Government. I would like to thank him for his contribution and I am sure he will play a pivotal role in the continuing development of India."

Participating in a "war" meant for this "continuing development" runs against the most basic value system of the armed forces. Defence minister AK Antony has made it clear that there is no scope for directly employing the armed forces in the ongoing battle against the Maoists. Air Chief Marshal PV Naik, too, has made his position clear: "I am not in favour of deploying the Air Force. Our training and weapons are meant for enemies across the border and to inflict maximum lethality on them. We cannot do this on our own people." The Army chief was more reserved, holding that our polity was "wise and astute enough"' not to deploy the Army against Naxalism, which was "not a secessionist movement"'.

All this is gratifying. Hopefully, the defence chiefs will stick to their stand even under immense pressure from vested interests and the mercenary spin-media, asserting that their duty lies in upholding the "safety, honour and welfare of the nation and its people" and not in securing and holding territory for MNCs.Only then will "the image and dignity of our soldiers" remain untarnished and the armed forces can one day hope to be the moral anchor for a parent society that is drifting without mooring. g

GOVERNMENT ON A BOOBY TRAP?

Why 'Chidambaram's war' may cause more problems than it will solve

by **Diptendra Raychaudhuri**

THE massacre of the CRPF jawans at Dantewada is the first indicator of the dark fact that the state may lose the Naxal war. Losing does not mean the state will have to withdraw its forces from there, it means the state's robust reaction may fail to yield tangible results. Ironically, it may end up expanding the scale and geographical extent of the conflict.

The causes of the government's fighting a losing battle are staring it in the face but no one seems to be in a mood to admit it. Clubbed together, the causes amount to "abysmal administrative failure".

Alienation factor

Various parameters indicate the failure of the state as the root cause of the spreading Maoist influence in a vast region of central-eastern India. That this is beyond any debate is proved by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's inaugural address at the Conference of Chief Ministers (on Implementation of the Forest Rights Act) on November 4, 2009: "The alienation built over decades is now taking a dangerous turn in some parts of our country....The systematic exploitation and social and economic abuse of our tribal communities can no longer be tolerated."

But the state did not take any measure to neutralize the alienation factor through new modes of functioning such as sending troops to provide food, clothes and medicines to every household. It plunged straight into a violent war by sending thousands of paramilitary personnel to the tribal homelands. The PM and Home Minister P Chidambaram have thus started this war without first making a concerted effort to mitigate the alienation factor.

FICCI diktat

It has to be granted that following an alternative strategy like "military intervention for reaching food" would have been costly in terms of both time and money. But that was probably the only viable first step. It is true that, at many places, the Naxalites stall developmental initiatives.

To collect material for my novel set against the backdrop of the Maoist movement, I toured a large area under Naxal influence some years ago. And, in the 21st century, I came across incomplete bridges and roads – the construction stopped by the Naxalites. But I also interacted with a lot of people who believed, out of ignorance, that the Naxalites were an alternative state power. If I came across a half-finished bridge in Gadchiroli district of

Maharashtra, at the same time I also met people who approached the Naxalites to set up tubewells in their locality.

Under the circumstances, the Maoists would hardly fire upon paramilitary forces bringing food, clothes and medicine for villagers.

The government inexplicably chose to act fast. It adopted the US foreign doctrine of "clear, hold and develop" for an enemy territory – a strategy to "clear and dominate" the Naxalite areas. The government has closely followed what FICCI said in its Task Force Report on National Security and Terrorism. The chapter titled "A robust response to the Naxal challenge" says: "Determined and superior force application followed by repair of the faultlines will be critical to demolishing the myth of Maoist/Naxal invincibility and will set an example through state domination."

The causes of the government's fighting a losing battle are obvious but no one seems to be in a mood to admit to abysmal administrative failure

REUTERS

Dantewada massacre: how much more blood before reason?

It is clear the war on the Naxalites is an offshoot of industry pressure on the government. The latter's failure to assess the long-term effects was a natural corollary.

Intelligence angle

To win a war, the essential ingredient is intelligence input about the opponent. However, due to the above-mentioned reasons, the state did not even wait to see whether an intelligence network could be put in place. It ignored the fact that it is pitted against a force that has a large intelligence network. From Lalgarh of Bengal to Gadchiroli of Maharashtra, this network has been developed over decades. The government's efforts to break up this network will only bring upon it accusations of harassment of the common man, Dalits and tribals. It will further the alienation of the local people. And the government will not get information from the locals to carry out targeted operations against the Naxalites. This is the main reason why the Army and Air Force are unwilling to join this war.

Naxal resilience

According to intelligence sources, input that is both accurate and significant – essential to hunt down the rebels – is not coming from the locals. Independent social activists say there are three reasons for this: (i) Many of the locals are Naxal sympathisers; (ii) a greater number of the populace prefers to remain neutral and sit on the fence; (iii) a large cross-section of people, mainly from the more affluent (by rural standards) section, fear the Naxalites.

Against this backdrop, it can be assumed that even after three years – the period Chidambaram keeps emphasizing – there may not be tangible results. Naxalites were wiped out of Andhra Pradesh twice – once in the early 1970s (after the first rebellion) and again in the late 1980s and early 1990s (when the "people's war" was plagued by internal differences). They staged comebacks and had to be eliminated again a decade later by the late YSR Reddy. Indications are that they are regrouping in the Telengana region and planning a largescale offensive.

So destruction of some Naxalite bases might not actually debilitate their ability to rise Phoenix-like from the ashes.

Conflict escalation

The war, despite causing them some setbacks, might actually goad the Naxalites into exploiting their opponent's weakness and expanding the conflict zone. They have never before made such a lethal strike (some people in government circles believe the number of jawans killed in Dantewada was much higher than the official figure of 74). The government might inadvertently have provided them an opportunity to prove their firepower over a very large swathe between northern and southern India.

The security forces are fixed targets for them, while for the security forces their targets are neither fixed nor demarcated. The Naxalites do not wear olive green and carry arms all the time. Over almost four decades, they have learnt to melt among the local populace.

It is essential for a democratic India that the politics of violence be defeated yet Chidambaram's war may create more problems than it will solve. g

(The writer is a journalist and author of the novel, A Naxal Story.*)*

Security forces are fixed targets, while for the security forces their targets are neither fixed nor demarcated. The Naxalites do not wear olive green.

Bureaucrati

When a midlevel civil servant is trapped between the whims

by **Shailaja Chandra**

PERHAPS the biggest challenge that middle-level officers in Central Ministries face is managing Ministers and Secretaries who are at loggerheads – though, fortunately, it happens but occasionally.

A veteran was being inducted for the umpteenth time as a Union Minister. A telephone call conveyed that he would arrive at 10 am and would expect to be received in the foyer. In stout Humphrey Appleby mould, the Secretary refused to budge from his office. An entourage of Joint Secretaries, including myself, awaited the ministerial cavalcade. Alighting in a white silk kurta and flowing dhoti, the Minister was escorted upstairs – all of us smiling and gushing, he in stony silence. His first question was, "Where is the Secretary?" Learning that the Secretary was "in his chamber", his next question was, "When is he due to retire?"

The Secretary had his own hotline to the PMO, possibly a pre-arranged strategy to pull the Minister's coat-tails should he fly too high. Predictably, a tug of war ensued, leaving the entire Ministry observing the see-saw cranking away every day.

In such an atmosphere, the officers had to perform trapeze acts to survive. Bleating about the Minister's maneouvrings to the Secretary was fraught with unpredictable consequences. He might report the whole thing in writing to the Cabinet Secretary or, worse, the PMO – the surest way of getting marked a blabbermouth. Besides, unless the Minister approved proposals originating from a Joint Secretary, the progress of programmes would remain in limbo. And the Joint Secretary would be held responsible for nonperformance, Minister or no Minister.

I realized that, instead of playing Joan of Arc, it was better to find ways of securing the Secretary's and Minister's approvals with a show of quiet efficiency. One day, as I was leaving his room, the Minister said, "You are head and shoulders above everyone in the Ministry. You have the makings of someone who will one day become Cabinet Secretary." I was taken aback but could not help preening as I pictured myself ensconced in the hallowed portals of Rashtrapati Bhavan from where the Cabinet Secretary ruled a sprawling bureaucracy. I wondered how I would look, playing God at Secretaries' meetings.

"You have the qualities of two wonderful officers (X and Y) who worked under me," the Minister continued, sensing that he had hooked me. "These two officers always found answers to the knottiest problems. You too have their intelligence but you are not using it properly. Find a way." His gold-rimmed spectacles glinted under the 40 incandescent bulbs above.

I devoured the story but wondered how I was to solve the "knotty problems" he referred to – what he sought was not just irregular but downright illegal. Telling this to the Secretary would definitely invite a dressing down for hobnobbing with the Minister; worse, he would report the whole thing to different watchdog organizations – in writing. Their investigation would never establish the involvement of the Minister for lack of evidence. His denial would end the matter. But I would emerge a squealer – not to be trusted with "sensitive" work.

One evening, returning to my room at 8 pm after one of the interminable briefings that Ministries are famous for, I found three strangers waiting. Before I could speak, one said, "We thought we would just wait to see this extraordinary officer who does no work." He tilted his chair and stretched his khadi-clad arms behind the backs of his two companions and bared Pan

i c Siberia

ims of a minister and the ego of a secretary, a Gulag beckons

ILLUSTRATION: ARUNA

Bahaar-marked teeth at me.

"We have heard so much about your tremendous ability not to do any work that we wanted to set eyes on this great woman who has brought the work of the Ministry to a standstill," said his rumpled companion.

I kept my cool and asked, "May I know who you are and what I can do for you?"

"Oh, there is a lot you can do for us," was the reply, accompanied by raucous laughter. They did not divulge their identity but continued to be insulting and sarcastic.

As before, I had no options. Complaining to the Secretary would have required me to reduce everything into a laborious typewritten note, which would have leaked out even before an inquiry started. Knowing the system, nothing would happen to the bounders but I would certainly be faulted for ineptitude, for not even knowing how they gained entry to my room, and God knows what else.

The next morning, I was called to the Minister's office to discuss a file. It never occurred to me that my visitors had come at his behest and I foolishly blurted out the whole story to him. This time, far from telling me that I was Cabinet Secretary material, he said curtly, "But isn't it true that you have not done many things you have been asked to?"

"No, sir. I have done every bit of work assigned to me and you too have kindly praised my work, sir," I replied.

"My dear," said the Minister, "whatever else you do is of no consequence to me. All that matters is whether you have done what I have asked you to do. Recall what I had asked you to do. Not once but several times."

"But, sir, I told you many weeks ago that those things simply cannot be done. If I did anything of the kind, it would get exposed by the media and the matter would also go to court – even Parliament. You, sir, would get involved in the whole controversy," said I, hoping that at least that would cut ice with him.

Unfazed by my forebodings, the Minister said softly, "Find a way. And this time if you do not do it, Shailaja, I will have no option but to take away your work. Don't say I have not warned you."

I was aware that as long as the Minister was politically relevant, he would never be taken to task. My complaint if I sent one would be my word against his. And in the process I would get branded as unfit for handling "higher responsibilities" (read Ministers) – reason enough to be marginalized when promotion lists were pruned.

NOTHING happened immediately. Some months later, the Secretary retired. Just before the new one joined, the work distribution in the Ministry was revamped. I found myself shorn of not only the most important desk in the Ministry but also of all the programmes I had nurtured for the past three years. I was left with not even half-an-hour's work and ample humiliation in the bargain. The smallest things hurt the most. Colleagues changed the subject when I entered the lunch room. My private secretary sought a change. The drivers and waiters had the cheek to snigger, "*Abhi bhi aap ko koi kaam nahi diya?*"

I had been reduced to complete irrelevance – the worst ignominy that can be heaped on a civil servant. I later came to know that the Minister got his way on his knotty problems. I wondered what my successor had done to appease him and yet remain safe and dry. Of course, no one told me. Then, one fine evening, 10 months later, retribution came in the nature of a phone call. The private secretary to the *chota* Minister was on the line, chortling. "Madam, there is good news for you!" he announced. "The

The bureaucracy is a complex organization. For all the checks and balances that exist on paper, every officer has to keep both Secretary and Minister on the right side because a reputation for 'getting along' within 'the system' is vital.

bada mantri has been asked to put in his resignation. Your problems are now over. Congratulations!"

And so it was that nearly a year after I was shorn of all work, a new Minister took over, redistribution of work was ordered and I found myself at last with something worthwhile to do.

THE bureaucracy is a complex organization. For all the checks and balances that exist on paper, every officer has to keep both Secretary and Minister on the right side because a reputation for "getting along" within "the system" is vital. In that pursuit, it is foolish to blab, leave alone make a written complaint. The system is simply not geared to act on complaints because there are political trade-offs which ensure that Ministers get protected as long as they are considered necessary politically. Officers are dispensable and waving a flag of uprightness is considered a sign of naivete, whatever may be spouted about being free and frank, bold and brave.

Yet, however powerful, Ministers are completely dependent on the bureaucracy to get their work done. At the end of the day, financial sanctions have to issue and orders have to be signed in the name of the government – something only officers can do or get done. So Ministers will use every ploy possible to influence officers and zero in on the medicine that works.

In the state governments, the Queen of Hearts will simply order "off with his head" if an officer protests too much. In the Central government, the King of Spades has to manage with the officers he gets. And he will use whatever levers are available to get his work done: bully, browbeat, cajole and flatter – and, ultimately, humiliate. If nothing works, he will find a replacement to do his bidding. Fortunately, not all Ministers are like that. g

Chasing shadows

A crucial SAIL-related file is not moving at all

by **S Subramanium**

TWO bureaucrats, on the panel of selected candidates for the post of Chairman, Steel Authority of India (SAIL), have found themselves in a piquant situation. CS Verma, Director, Finance, of Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd (BHEL) and Anup Rai Chaudhary, Chairman of the National Buildings Construction Corporation

Roongta: extension in the offing?

(NBCC), are running from pillar to post in the Ministry of Steel in Udyog Bhawan. Each meets Virbhadra Singh, Minister for Steel, or Atul Chaturvedi, Secretary, Steel, virtually every other day. SAIL Chairman Sushil Kumar Roongta's term ends on May 31 and the two officers are simply asking when the file with their names will move from the Ministry to the Prime Minister for final approval.

The Minister's stock assurance is that he has instructed the Secretary to clear the file and that it will move in a day or two. However, if insiders are to be believed, both the Minister and Secretary are unhappy with the candidates. They feel that the SAIL Chairman should be a person of stature, with a proven record.

Verma boasts that he has a direct link to 10, Janpath and his name is listed in the register of loyalists at that august address (if there be such a register). It is true that when he was posted by BHEL in Amethi, he had done a good job and been noticed by the Gandhi family.

According to Udyog Bhawan sources, Virbhadra Singh met the Prime Minister and, though what transpired is not known, the file has still not moved.

There is another issue playing on the minds of the Ministry seniors. SAIL has already begun implementing plans for major expansion – to the tune of Rs 70,000 crore. The orders for a new plant and machinery worth Rs 40,000 have to be placed. The Ministry higher-ups are unsure that a new boss of SAIL would adhere to the expansion plans.

As things stand, the Ministry has only two options – scrapping the panel of candidates or deferring the movement of the file. Scrapping the panel would yield three months' time but it would also create unwanted controversy. The better option is simply not to move the file.

According to the office of the Secretary, the Ministry is inclined to extend Roongta's term for six months. This would keep the Ministry functioning smoothly. However, the file has to move eventually – if not now, then six months from now. g

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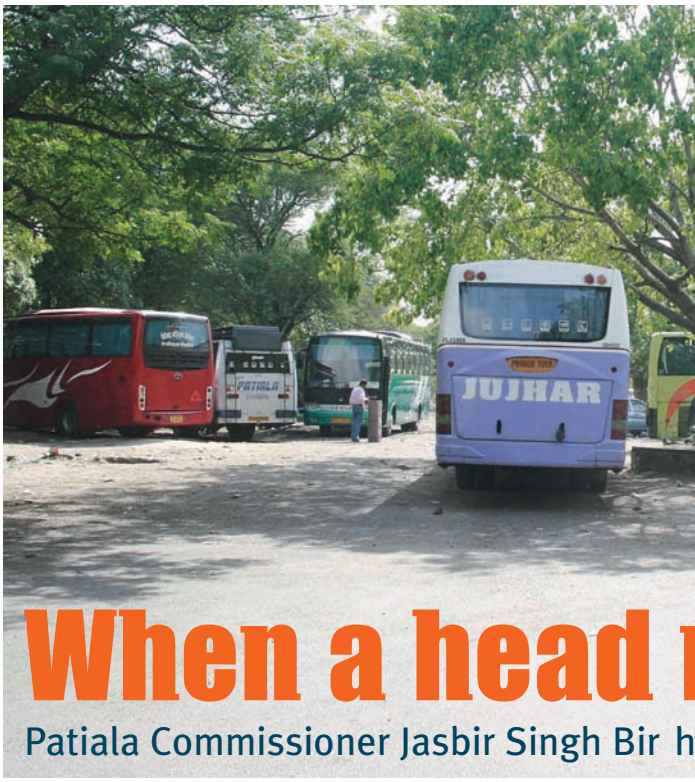

When a head

Patiala Commissioner Jasbir Singh Bir h

by **Surinder Awasthi**

FROM Punjab comes this tale of an exemplary career in government being cut short because a senior bureaucrat came up against the first family of the state – the Badals – in a bid at public grievance redressal.

Forty-two years ago, on a winter morning, an 18-year-old lad peddled 45 km on a borrowed bicycle from his village in Ropar district to the hallowed portals of the Punjab Civil Secretariat in Chandigarh. The intrepid teenager made the journey, carrying a bit of money for some food, to ask why he had been rejected after appearing for an interview for the job of a daily wage clerk. The officer he confronted had no response and offered to take him on. Thus began Jasbir Singh Bir's career in government, which saw him work his way up from the grass roots to the post of Commissioner, Patiala.

Sadly, four decades later, this impeccable service record has come to a bitter end with Bir opting for voluntary retirement in mid-April. The decision to terminate his career came after he was unable to remove a "public nuisance" in the form of luxury buses that are parked near a market in Mohali. The buses belong to private operators and some to the family trust of Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal. No one is prepared to take on the Badals and Bir ultimately gave up his lonely battle.

It is yet another of life's blows for Bir, who has weathered many since he first began earning for his family as a five-year-old by selling toys at fairs or helping *lalaris* (dyers) dry turbans. He contributed to the family income and paid his school expenses, and, after all this, passed the matriculation exam with distinction. Now, his great ambition was to get a "decent government job".

Once hired as a daily wage clerk, he never looked back – impressing all his seniors with his diligence. Learning the office work by day, he attended an evening college and completed graduation by night. It was while working as a personal assistant (PA) to a PA on the Chief Minister's staff that Bir was spotted by the then CM, Giani Zail Singh, and was nominated to the Punjab Civil Service in 1976 and subsequently elevated to the IAS' Punjab cadre in 1992.

Last month, at the peak of his career as Commissioner, Patiala with additional charge of two other commissionaires, Bir felt he had no more "strength and courage to bear the pain of such a helpless administrative structure" and sought voluntary retirement, serving a three-month notice under Rule (16) of the All-India Services Act.

Bir had given the public an assurance that he would get the nuisance of the parked buses removed. Instead, he himself was shunted to an insignificant posting in the secretariat.

SANJAY KURL

l rolls...

ir has had enough of the system

Bir was unable to remove a 'public nuisance' in the form of luxury buses that are parked near a market in Mohali. The buses belong to private operators and the Badal family trust

(From left) Bir, Mohali busstand and the Badals: imbroglio

Despite a public outcry and orders by the Punjab and Haryana High Court, the district administration did not act. The issue started to affect Bir's health as he became increasingly prone to anxiety and frustration.

THOUGH this is not the first such incident of his career and nor have they occurred only during the present Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD)-BJP regime, Bir is reluctant to talk about it. "The fault is not with the individuals but with the system," is all he states. Though his decision to leave is final, he is reluctant to hit out at anyone as long as he is in service. "I can't open my mouth. After all, I am a government servant and am bound by rules and regulations," he says.

The IAS officers' association also did not come to his rescue though it initially tried to dissuade him from quitting. Later, it washed its hands of the matter, alleging that Bir had vested interests in the issue as he owned a shop-cum-office complex in the same market and his business interests were affected.

Bir refutes this, saying that neither he nor his brothers have any commercial property in Mohali or elsewhere in the country. "One brother was killed by terrorists and another is in the Punjab Education Board," he says. Perhaps the president of the association is keen to improve his rapport with the CM's family, he adds.

"Even if my family had premises in the market, that would have been more reason to see that illegal activities are not permitted under the nose of the Commissioner," argues Bir, again emphasizing that the system stinks.

He points out that he has never petitioned politicians for postings and, wherever posted, he always joined immediately. He does admit that he got plum postings irrespective of the government in power. But he is critical of many a Chief Minister, be it Zail Singh, Beant Singh, Amarinder Singh or Parkash Singh Badal. "I tried to serve the government of the day irrespective of its political persuasions because it had the public mandate while resisting illegal orders which are not in the public interest," he states.

His friends claim that, in the early 1970s, he once proceeded on long leave and was persuaded to rejoin by Zail Singh though he was then just a Punjabi stenographer. They say that the latest incident was the proverbial last straw that broke the camel's back. His detractors, on the other hand, point out that he is a good orator, winning awards in his college days, and is eyeing politics. Though Bir denies it, they say his move to take on the Badal family was the first step in this direction. g

HOPE, GRIT, DE

The Pune institution has breathed new li

by **Col R Hariharan**

ON a summer afternoon in 1967, I went to swim at the army club in Pune (then known as Poona). I found a powerful swimmer doing quite a few lengths in a methodical crawl and could not match his stamina. But, when he climbed out of the pool, I got the shock of my life – both his legs were missing!

That was the first time I saw Pankaj Shivram Joshi, who recently passed away. A graduate of the National Defence Academy, Joshi was commissioned in 8 Gurkha Rifles. He retired as Lieutenant General and was decorated a number of times. The honours included PVSM, AVSM and VSM. His is a saga of courage and determination to overcome adversity. He lost both his legs at barely 24, stepping on a land mine in an operational area in Sikkim.

In 1967, the newly formed Artificial Limb Centre (ALC) at Pune provided a glimmer of hope for Armymen who had lost their limbs. There were many such cases in the 1965 India-Pakistan war. I would see them limping across to our unit canteen, trying out their newly acquired legs.One of my most poignant memories is of meeting my drill instructor from my cadet days – Kartar Singh, a JCO from the Jat Regiment. On seeing me, Kartar broke down. "*Saabji*, I was good only as a drill instructor. Without my leg, my life is finished," he said. I had no words to console him because in those days Army personnel who lost their limbs were sent home with a disability pension.

But Joshi, who too was fitted with artificial limbs at the ALC, was of different mettle. From day one, he never gave up. He fought every inch to overcome his handicap. He came to the swimming pool riding a bicycle. His friends said he was on the dance floor within a month of getting the artificial legs. Fortunately for him, the Army changed its medical categorization rules in 1978. Physical capability rather than physical condition became the determining factor for retention of physically handicapped personnel. Joshi's grit and willpower enabled him to achieve what was seemingly impossible when a special medical board examined him. His physical capability was found to be on a par with any officer's.

Years later, when I attended the Senior Command course, I saw Joshi as an instructor at the War College, Mhow. Nobody spoke of his handicap as we saw him climbing high ground with us. I heard a number of stories of his achievements: his participation in the Himalayan Car Rally as part of the Army team and his cycling 40 km in a cycle expedition. There was no stopping him as he went on to command a battalion, brigade and corps. So we were not surprised when he was made Commander of the Central Command with Lt General rank.

Joshi's life is reminiscent of Britain's World War II hero – Group Captain Douglas Robert Steuart Bader of the Royal Air Force. He was commissioned in 1931. A flamboyant personality, he lost both legs in an air crash while attempting a low-level slow roll in response to a dare. He was retired on medical grounds in 1933, but relentlessly overcame his limitations and showed the RAF he could still fly a fighter aircraft. When World War II broke out, the RAF took him back. He flew many fighter missions and took part in the operations in Dunkirk and the Battle of Britain. He made 22 "kills" of German aircraft.

Bader was taken prisoner when he baled out after his aircraft was shot down during a mission over occupied France in 1941. He escaped in August

In 1967, the newly formed artificial limb centre provided hope for Armymen who had lost their limbs in the 1965 India-Pakistan war. I would see them limping across to our unit canteen, trying out their newly acquired legs.

: TERMINATION

w life into the bodies of disabled soldiers

1942 only to be recaptured and sent to Colditz Castle, a prisoner of war camp for those who made repeated attempts to escape. He impressed even the German ace pilot, Adolf Galland, who became his friend. When the war ended, the RAF refused his request for continued service and he retired in early 1946.

The legend of Bader still lives in British memory. He remains a visible manifestation of the nation's proud "never say die" attitude.

Like Bader, Gen Joshi was an ideal role model for young people. Unfortunately, he was born in a nation that lauds only filmstars or cricket players as role models. The others who hog media headlines are politicians who kindle the worst divisive instincts among the public. Little wonder that Joshi's passing away went unnoticed by the mainstream media.

Gen. Pankaj Shivram Joshi (left) of 8 Gurkha Rifles lost both legs to a land mine at age 24 and was fighting fit after receiving artificial limbs. He is akin to Britain's hero, Group Captain Douglas Bader (right), who made 22 'kills' of German aircraft during World War II, using his artificial legs.

YET the armed forces will continue to produce more Joshis. Recently, there came heartwarming news of the Army deciding to promote Brigadier SK Razdan, a paratrooper paralysed from the waist down, to Major General. Fifteen years ago, Razdan suffered a spinal injury in a fire fight in Kashmir where he saved the lives of 14 women. He has been confined to a wheelchair since. He won the Kirti Chakra, the second highest award for peacetime gallantry.

The media report of Razdan's promotion said, "Razdan would often tell his friends about how he had cheated death, but sometimes he regretted not being a martyr." There must be many more Razdans in other walks of life who are not as lucky. They push on but their grit and leadership qualities go unrecognized. The nation is the loser as the flock has no role models worth the name. g

najeeb jung

'It is easy to reinvent yourself'

The new VC of Jamia Millia Islamia is a true renaissance IAS man whose journey has taken him from the tribal forests of Madhya Pradesh to the Railways ministry, the ADB, and finally...Ghalib

MY father's family came to India from Saudi Arabia in 1840 and my mother's with the Mughals in the 1520s. We have a 160-year-old house in Daryaganj. My mother, Begum Halim Jung, who is also a poet, came into that house at 16 as a bride and is now 89. My father was a businessman and then went into social work.

I studied at St Columbus School and did graduation and MA (History) from St Stephen's College. I later changed to economics and studied at the London School of Economics. Education is about acquiring knowledge of different things. So you gravitate from one subject to another.

I belong to Delhi but my cadre was Madhya Pradesh because we used to have a roster system. I was not senior enough to get Delhi. MP has been lucky to have a series of good Chief Ministers. PC Sethi was CM and, after training, I was posted as District Magistrate in Mhow – in his constituency. We never had any extra-Constitutional pressure from Sethi*ji*. His only demand was that the morning newspaper should reach him by 5 am!

My main years as DM were under Arjun Singh. I have the highest regard for him. There is much criticism of his later years but he had great concern for *adivasis*, Scheduled Castes, backwards. Digvijay Singh had the same sensitivity towards the poor.

I worked in Datia, which was infested with dacoits. Those were the days of Phoolan Devi, Malkhan Singh and Paan Singh. Arjun Singh took crucial steps to control dacoity.

Next I was in Raipur, then MP's largest district. Again, I had freedom to run a good administration. Those days were very different from the present. I worked in Chhindwara, Betul, Datia, Indore, Raipur – and every district has its own challenges. I acquired knowledge of people, of administration. In my 22 years, I spent 14 years in the field. I didn't spend a day in the Secretariat as Deputy Secretary or Special Secretary or whatever.

MP is a state where integrity and straightforwardness have always been appreciated. If you are clean, you are liked. The Chief Secretary, RP Noronha, was a living legend. Though he retired about six months after my joining, we grew under his shadow.

I was Managing Director, MP State Oilseeds Cooperative Federation, for two years. It was based on the milk cooperative, Anand. We were the first to start soya bean production in MP. We taught farmers, bought the produce, crushed the beans, sold and exported soya milk, and sold soya oil in India.

Then Madhavrao Scindia, Railways Minister in the Rajiv Gandhi government, brought me to Delhi as his private secretary. I came on January 7, 1985 and stayed for three years. It was a great period for the railways.

As Director in the Department of Steel for two-and-a-half years, I was in charge of steel import and export. India produced six million tonnes but our demand was 19-20 million tonnes. The pricing of steel was a big issue and I was part of it.

After that I went back to MP as Managing Director, MP State Financial Corporation, for two years. This is the arm of the government for financing

I worked in Datia, which was infested with dacoits. Those were the days of Phoolan Devi, Malkhan Singh and Paan Singh. Arjun Singh took crucial steps to control dacoity.

RAJEEV DABRAL

small, medium and large industries in MP. I returned to Delhi as Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas and was in charge of exploration and production sites. The government was just starting privatization and we negotiated contracts with private companies.

In 1995 I went to the Asian Development Bank (ADB) as the Senior Energy Specialist. Again, I was looking after oil and gas, and energy operations of the Bank. I had two phases in the ADB. In 1999, I went to the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies (this is a boutique institute which specializes in oil, gas and power) on a teaching assignment till 2002. It's one of the finest institutes for research on oil and gas.

I came back to the ADB in 2002 when I was in charge of rebuilding the destroyed oil and gas sector of Afghanistan. I was in charge of building and developing the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Gas Pipeline (TAPI) Project. This was to bring large quantities of gas from Turkmenistan into India via Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Government of India is naturally very concerned about the security issue in bringing a pipeline through Afghanistan and Pakistan. But we can build adequate measures to protect the gas. A pipeline is 30 feet underground, it can't be destroyed easily. If there is an explosion, it can be repaired in 4-5 or 8-10 hours. We also propose to store natural gas under the earth in salt caverns, so that if the pipeline is damaged, supply will continue. The government is revisiting that project.

In 2000, when I knew I would not come back to the Government of India from ADB, I took early retirement. My children got into the international academic system, two girls in London and one in Columbia. If I had returned to the Service, I would not have been able to pay the fees.

I never encountered lack of freedom in the government. You can do what you wish if you have integrity and sincerity. The government gives you more liberty to do work than the private sectors today. In the private sector, you keep running to your Manager or Managing Director. In government, even as a 23-year-old Sub-Divisional Officer, I did not need to go to anyone because you have clear-cut responsibilities under the Constitution. As a Collector and DM, the freedom you have is unimaginable. No job is really self-limiting, it's what you make of the job that matters.

I've reinvented myself four or five times in the last 35 years. I've often been asked about shifting from one field to another. It's not difficult. It takes 6-7 months of application, reading, meeting people and thinking. The IAS and ADB systems of working are completely different, ADB and Oxford are completely different, even Oxford and Jamia Millia Islamia are different. One learns and grows.

The Oxford Institute for Energy Studies had a legendary Director, Robert Mabro – considered the last word on oil. He asked me to work with him in Oxford and ADB was happy to give me leave for three years. I wrote two books – *Gas to Asia* and *Gas to Europe* (followed later by *The Economics of L&G Business*). Then, ADB (who would not extend my leave) offered me an assigment in Afghanistan. President Hamid Karzai had just been elected and was forming a very dynamic Cabinet with old colleagues from the World Bank, Australia, Germany and a lot of Afghan experts. We were part of an adventure. In the Ministry for Petroleum, we had to recreate everything – recruitment, training, teaching how to make a note sheet, how

Madhavrao Scindia – The boss who became a brother

I'VE worked with Madhya Pradesh's politicians very closely. I have a family relationship with Madhavrao Scindia's family because I worked as his Private Secretary. We were, in many ways, very close and he was really a brother to me. I was among the last people he spoke to before he died on September 30, 2001. I was coming to India in a few days from England and he called me that morning to say he was going to Kanpur but that I must meet him while I was in India.

He was a man of enormous integrity and vision. His vision turned around the railways in those five years. Those were the years when we would start work at 8.45 am and never finish before midnight. Often we would work till 2 am. And not that I would be working alone, he would be in the office himself.

to move a proposal, how to run the Ministry.

We rebuilt the Afghan gas system. The gas fields in Shibirghan were destroyed. We rebuilt the wells, relaid the pipelines. The power lines from the north of Kabul were rebuilt. We gave advice, provided loans. I must have made 30-35 trips from Manila to Kabul. At the end of the three years, we had succeeded partly in doing what we wanted. I returned to Oxford, quit the ADB in 2005, went to Australia and stayed there till February 2009.

Then I came back to India and became Vice-Chancellor, Jamia Millia Islamia. In Jamia, we distinguish between literacy (10 per cent in importance), education (40 per cent) and knowledge (50 per cent). If we can impart knowledge, we have succeeded. What kind of Indian I've created, is he emotionally stable, is he prepared to contribute to this country in a good way, as a human being does he go out with knowledge, does he learn to differentiate, does he learn philosophy, does he learn about Gandhi and Kant. A responsible citizen of this country is what we endeavour to have and that is the biggest challenge. Students of Jamia are outstanding, they have great ambition and great hope from India and India should have hope from them. These are India's children for the next 50-60 years.

WE are doing a lot of new things in Jamia. We have started BA (Philosophy), BA (Sanskrit). We have 200 courses, right from a full-fledged engineering department to architecture, physiotherapy, dentistry, to the School of International Languages, Persian and Urdu, the Institute of Mass Communication (probably the best in India) and the top-of-the-line fine arts department. We have 24 centres of excellence dedicated to research and advanced studies. This year we are starting think tanks to study Pakistan. We also have Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Iran, Afghanistan programmes.

Jamia is a great place so I've a professor of Urdu who comes and teaches me only Ghalib for one hour. One has read Ghalib all one's life. Ghalib is such a deep and intense philosopher, to study Ghalib you've to know something else.

People seem to think that we are behind Delhi University, it's not true. Of course, DU is a college university whereas we are a faculty university so you can't really compare, they are poles apart. JNU has 6,000 students, only postgraduate. I train my children from Nursery. If you enter Nursery, it's possible you may do your PhD here without changing campus. Lots of my senior professors whose fathers were professors here did this.

We want to take this university to a completely different level. The only thing that is impeding me is limited infrastructure. We have a campus of about 200 acres, ideal for 9,000 students, but we have 20,000. I have to demolish and rebuild, and create new buildings.

I've been a socialist at heart. I would not have become what I am if I had not been part of the Civil Service. I would not have grown and matured in the way I have, I would not have understood India as I understand it today. There is much criticism of the Civil Service but I have utmost respect for the opportunities it gives to grow and learn and contribute to society and country. g

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For the complete list, see www.gfilesindia.com

TRACKING

For a complete list of appointments & retirements, see ***www.gfilesindia.com***

P Uma Shankar
The 1976 batch, IAS officer of UP cadre has been appointed as secratary, ministry of power.

BV WANCHOO
The 1976-batch IPS officer of the West Bengal cadre has been promoted to the rank of DG.

R GOPAL KRISHNAN
The 1970-batch IAS officer of the Madhya Pradesh cadre has become Additional Secretary in the PMO.

SNEHLATA KUMAR
The 1979-batch IAS officer of the Madhya Pradesh cadre is now Additional Secretary in the Government of India.

B BHAMATHI
The 1979-batch IAS officer of the Bihar cadre has been made Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs.

V SOMASUNDARAN
The 1979-batch IAS officer of the Kerala cadre has been given in situ promotion to the rank of Additional Secretary.

RAJIV TAKRU
The 1979-batch IAS officer of the Gujarat cadre has been promoted to Additional Secretary.

ANITA KAUL
The 1979-batch IAS officer of the Karnataka cadre has become Additional Secretary in the Department of Elementary Education.

EK BHARAT BHUSHAN
The 1979-batch IAS officer of the Kerala cadre is now Additional Secretary and FA in the Ministry of Civil Aviation and IT.

VK GUPTA
The 1977-batch IPS officer of the Gujarat cadre is now Additional Director in the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

V RAJGOPALAN
The 1978-batch IAS officer of the Uttar Pradesh cadre has assumed charge as Additional Secretary, Chemicals and Petro-chemicals.

T JACOB
The 1984-batch IAS officer of the Tamil Nadu cadre has been appointed Joint Secretary, Food and Distribution.

PANKAJ AGRAWAL
The 1978-batch IAS officer of the Uttar Pradesh cadre is now Principal Resident Commissioner (PRC) with the Uttar Pradesh government, Delhi.

PK GERA
The 1985-batch IAS officer of the Gujarat cadre has become Joint Director, Lal Bahadur Shastri Academy of Administration, Mussoorie.

TALLEEN KUMAR
The 1987-batch IAS officer of the West Bengal cadre has been appointed Joint Secretary in the Department of Industry Policy and Planning (DIPP).

S MACHENDRANATHAN
The 1979-batch IAS officer of the Tamil Nadu cadre has become Additional Secretary & FA in Ministry of Steel.

LAKSHMI VENKATACHALAM
The 1978-batch IAS officer of the Karnataka cadre is now Vice-President (Private Sector and Co-financing Operations), ADB.

SUNIL KUMAR
The 1979-batch IAS officer of the Chhattisgarh cadre has been promoted to Additional Secretary.

MEENAKSHI SHARMA
The 1988-batch IA&AS officer is now posted as Accountant General (C&RA), Rajasthan, Jaipur.

GV VENUGOPALA SARMA
The 1986-batch IAS officer of the Orissa cadre has joined the Government of India as Joint Secretary, Home.

RAM LUBHAYA
The 1978-batch IAS officer of the Rajasthan cadre is now Secretary, National Commission of Scheduled Caste.

P PRABHAKARAN
The 1978-batch IAS officer of the Kerala cadre has been appointed Chief Secretary of Kerala.

NAVEEN KUMAR
The 1975-batch IAS officer of the Bihar cadre has joined the Planning Commission as Principal Adviser.

ARCHANA AGRAWAL
The 1990-batch IAS officer of the Uttar Pradesh cadre has been made Secretary, Vocational Education.

AARIZ AFTAB
The 1991-batch IAS officer of the West Bengal cadre has become Secretary, Mass Education Department.

AK CHAUHAN
The 1984-batch IRS IT officer has joined as Director General (DG) in the Competition Commission.

Moving On: ias officers retiring in May 2010

ASSAM-MEGHALAYA
S Manoharan (1975)
Lambha Roy (1988)
LN Tamuly (1990)

ANDHRA PRADESH
P Sunder Kumar (1984)

BIHAR
Dipika Padda (1974)
RA Kumar (1993)

GUJARAT
BC Chaudhari (1998)

HARYANA
Firoza Mehrotra (1974)

J&K
NK Verma (1993)
Gowhar Ahmed (1995)

KARNATAKA
RB Agawane (1980)

MADHYA PRADESH
Waseem Akhtar (1987)
KM Gautam (1992)

MANIPUR-TRIPURA
S Banerjee (1987)
KP Goswami (1990)
L Darlong (1997)

ORISSA
M Mishra (1993)

PUNJAB
Manjit Singh (1996)

TAMIL NADU
P ILango (1995)
R Palaniyandi (1998)

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Shop in sectors yet to enter bull run

THE markets' flirting with the Sensex, which crossed 18,000, has created a dilemma for small investors. As during the previous bull run, they are wondering if they have missed the bus or it is still a good time to invest. Prices of several leading stocks have crossed the high they reached during the previous bull run – raising the question of whether they have reached the bubble zone. A correction seems to have eluded those waiting to enter as and when it happens. A selective approach to investment would therefore be the best thing for investors.

The global economy is expected to grow at a decent 4.1 per cent this year. Investor confidence is high with a near-consensus among analysts that the recovery is for real. The markets have weathered worries about the withdrawal of fiscal stimulus, the Greek crisis and possibility of a double dip recession in the world economy. The markets have actually reacted positively to the monetary tightening resorted to by the Reserve Bank of India twice.

The reason for this may be positive data such as global manufacturing growth hitting a 70-month high, clear signs of job growth in the US and the growth in American consumption. Indian data has also been consistently good so far. Both exports and non-oil import numbers imply strong domestic as well as external growth. Firms see a revival of pricing power and plans to expand capacity. The quarterly earnings are likely to be the best so far. But the higher input prices may start to hurt the margins. The classic example of this would be RIL's failing to meet market expectations. The country's strategy for further growth depends upon five key interlinked macro-economic assumptions – inflation, interest rates, the monsoon, crude oil prices, and the possibility of the developed economies not relapsing into recession.

Inflation is the chief worry, with the capability to derail the economy. It is likely to be moderate in the second half of the year. It is too early to worry about growth due to rising interest rates, as proved by the bull run of 2003-07. However, the story is slightly different this time. The yield on 10-year government bonds in March 2004 was 5.2 per cent, compared to 8 per cent today. The deposit rate for 1-3 years was around 5.5 per cent, compared to 6.5 per cent today. The credit deposit ratio was 5.5 per cent in February 2004, compared to around 71 per cent today. Money growth was 14.5 per cent in February 2004, compared to 16.4 per cent today. The fiscal deficit was 3.99 per cent in 2004-05, while the projection is 5.5 per cent of GDP for 2010-11. Interest rates might therefore be considered high for the current stage of the cycle. So the expansion may be strong, but may not last long.

Investors will have to review their investment strategy off and on. The days of buy and hold seem to be over due to increasingly shorter bull runs. The money flows to the markets are also more investment-oriented than the speculative hedge funds type flows in the previous bull run. With a growing population, increasing domestic demand and high growth potential, India best fits the strategy for foreign investors with almost zero returns on the money parked by them elsewhere. But the markets are not decoupled from the US.

Investors are advised to give a closer look to the sectors that have not yet participated in the current market upsurge and concentrate on value picks.

Investors will have to review their investment strategy off and on. The days of buy and hold seem to be over due to increasingly shorter bull runs.

Insecticides (India) Limited

(CMP – Rs 139)

THE company's business is formulation of pesticides and manufacturing of technical pesticides. It has an excellent distribution network. Its formulated pesticides consist of pesticides, herbicides, fungicides and plant growth regulators. The technical pesticides are the basic active ingredients used for making formulations. Advance Crop Solutions Ltd is a wholly-owned subsidiary. With brands such as LETHAL, VICTOR and THIMET, the firm is the fastest-growing insecticides manufacturer and declared excellent results for the quarter ended December 31, 2009. The results for the period of nine months have shown remarkable growth of 36 per cent in sales and 45 per cent rise in net profit, compared to last year. The net sales and profit figures of nine months of the 2009-10 year have already exceeded the figures of the year ending March '09. With book value of Rs 80, dividend of 20 per cent and the trailing 12 months EPS of Rs 21.68 discounting the current market price by just a PE of 6.5 as against the industry PE of 17.20, the stock is an excellent value and growth pick. g

The author has no exposure in the stock recommended in this column. gfiles *does not accept responsibility for investment decisions by readers of this column. Investment-related queries may be sent to gfilesindia@gmail.com with Dr Sood's name in the subject line.*

Air India's Jadhav outwits Patel

WHEN he exited the Cabinet Secretary's office last year, Arvind Jadhav was a happy man. He had been appointed Chairman and Managing Director of Air India. However, the minute he arrived at the Air India

building on Mumbai's Marine Drive, the realization must have hit him that he was now captain of a sinking ship.

But Jadhav also realized that people were unaware that the ship was sinking. So the first thing he did was to announce the till-then-unannounced losses in the balance sheet. This came as a bombshell for Civil Aviation Minister Praful Patel, who was sorely responsible for the state of affairs.

It was the smartest move possible. With this one stroke, Jadhav halted Patel in his tracks.

Sai Baba bond to the rescue

THE administrator of Daman, Diu, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli (DDDNH) might be quite insignificant for the rest of the country but certainly not for the Home Ministry. Satya Gopal (1988, IAS, AGMUT) is the person holding the post for the past two years. There is a CBI probe on regarding his activities.

Gopal happens to be close to Patna Sahib MP and film star Shatrughan Sinha and former Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha. According to Home Ministry officials, these two leaders had persuaded Home Minister PC Chidambaram to appoint Gopal administrator.

But Nathubahi Gomanbhai, MP from Silvassa, complained to the

Home Ministry about Gopal's activities and the latter had to come to Delhi and explain himself to the bosses.

However, he was rescued by an influential godfather in the Home Ministry. Like Gopal, his godfather is also a Sai Baba devotee who visits the seer once a year.

Chatwal's friend in the PMO

THE media dust has settled over the controversial award of a Padma Bhushan to US-based hotelier Sant Singh Chatwal but some circles still wonder aloud on whose recommendation he got it. Some insist it was Hillary Clinton; others say Maratha politician Sharad Pawar was instrumental.

The Prime Minister's Office generally keeps an arm's length from such characters but insiders say that, intriguingly, this was not the case with Chatwal. It is said that an influential PMO official has known Chatwal for long – and that Chatwal has "taken care" of the said official in the US for decades.

The hacks now understand why there was no reaction from within the government when the award controversy broke. Such are the uses of having the right contact at the right place.

One for the road...err...air

TWENTY-four former Secretaries will be entitled to free upgrades to first class on Air India and access to VIP lounges for themselves and family at any airport across the country, for life. The announcement of this dream-come-true has come from the Ministry of Civil Aviation.

But, is such misplaced munificence appropriate at a time when Air India is reeling under heavy losses? The difference between economy and first class fares is hardly negligible. A Delhi-London economy class return ticket ranges between Rs 50,000-60,000 while a first class seat can go up to Rs 2 lakh.

ILLUSTRATIONS: ARUNA

Ministry sources say Cabinet or Finance Ministry approval was not sought and the Prime Minister's Office was not even informed. Civil Aviation Secretary M Madhavan Nambiar mooted the idea and got it implemented. None dared object. Might we add that he retires this September.... g

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